Rooted Texts

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Rooted: Stories of Knox County

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ROOTED:
Stories of Knox County

Written by Maria Brescia-Weiler

MTV arts

Kenyon College

Rooted: Stories of Knox County premiered at MTVarts Theater Company in Mount Vernon, Ohio in December, 2107. The play was directed by Bruce Jacklin, MTVarts Artistic Director. Set design was by Joseph Bell, and techincal design and support was provided by Scott Swingle.The play was produced with assistance from MTVarts Business Manager Janis Stone and Kenyon College Profesor Clara Román-Odio. The cast as follows:

Bob .....Philip Brain
Carl .....Jay Mahan
Carol .....Kelly Lauth
Claire .....Megan Evans
Dianne .....Daisy Collins
James .....Steve Jefferson
John .....Nick Wheeler
Kathy .....Jessica Meza
Margaret .....Cate Blair-Wilhelm
Mike .....Andrew Duffy
Olivia .....Caroline Campos
Patricia .....Susan Moreland
Rebecca .....Kerri Mahan
Richard .....Richard McKinley
Theresa .....Kyla Spencer

ABOUT THE SHOW

This project began as an independent study course led by Kenyon College Professor Clara Román-Odio, which was catalyzed by the passion and interest of the four students in the course, Maria Brescia-Weiler, Sarah Aguilar, Gabriel Jimenez Ekman, and Mary Grace Detmer. Their interest in the stories of the people of Knox County was sparked during a seminar entitled "Life along the Kokosing" taught by Kenyon Professor Howard Sacks.

"Stories of Knox County" was an oral history project aimed at capturing what it means to be a part of this community. Students interviewed a cross section of residents both diverse and representative of the community; variety in age, belief systems, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, level of activity in the community, and geographic localization within the county (i.e., urban/rural).

Although academic in origin, the project became real once the interests of these students converged with the pride and love of community so clearly expressed by the Knox County interviewees. Maria Brescia-Weiler wrote the play and the wheels were set in motion to produce it through a partnership with MTVarts. Our hope is that sharing with the community will increase dialogue and learning about each other.

Rooted: Stories of Knox County will be presented as a newly created work in MTVarts' newly created black box stage *warehouse14*.

CHARACTERS

Bob, founder of Yellowbird Foodshed, father of four, 30s or 40s

Carl, 61 years old, Farmer

Carol, 34 years old, co-worker of Margaret

Claire, 37 years old, actress, employee of Kenyon College, recovering alcoholic, mother of two

Dianne, 41 years old, co-owner of Foster's Pharmacy Eastside, mother of two

James, 65 years old, Mayor and former Police Chief of Fredericktown

John, manager of Athens Greek Restaurant, 30s or 40s

Kathy, 63 years old, director of the Escape Zone (religiously oriented youth center)

Margaret, 60 years old, Librarian

Mike, 61 years old, factory worker

Olivia, 18 years old, high school senior headed to college, Mexican-American

Patricia, 67 years old, former teacher, Kenyon Alumni in second co-ed class

Rebecca, 59 years old, Carl's wife

Richard, 88 years old, former executive director of YMCA

Theresa, 22 years old, African-American single mother, director of Knox County LGBTQ Facebook page

ACT 1

UNIFORMLY POSITIVE, BUT SO FLEETING

CAROL: I've always lived here, I've lived here since I was born. She doesn't actually live in Knox County. (*gesturing to Margaret*) But she's worked here forever. Well, not forever, I mean that's mean. She's worked here since I was born, if that's helpful. (*Laughter*)

CLAIRE: I have been living back in Knox County for about three and a half years. I had a break. I was born and raised here, and I went to college at Ohio University, and then I moved out to Los Angeles, I was there for about nine years. So in 1998 I went off to college, but I was born and raised here. I went to high school here.

CARL: I have lived in this house since September of 1958. This, this is the only home I've ever known. It's the only home I'll ever know. Unless she puts me in a nursing home! (*gestures to Rebecca, laughter*)

DIANNE: I've been born and raised in Knox County. I actually met my husband, we met on a blind date, he was born and raised in Knox County also, so we went to college, came back, got married and we're raising our family here, in Mount Vernon.

JAMES: Well, I met a girl. That's what brought me here. Not gonna lie to you. (*laughter*) In 1972 I started working in a factory, it was a bus factory, like the city busses. So I

started there in ’72 and in 1975 I joined the Knox County sheriff’s office as an auxiliary deputy. You guys know what an auxiliary deputy is? It’s a part time position, basically you go out and you ride with the officers and work the ball-games and things like that. So that was 1975. 1976 I met a girl up here and moved up here.

KATHY: I’ve lived in Mount Vernon since 1972. I came as a freshman at Mount Vernon Nazarene University, I grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio. My husband is a “townie,” he grew up right across the street from the Naz on Aims Street, and so when I met him, this was his home town and I loved Mount Vernon, it meant a lot to me. It was a small town and so we just stayed.

MARGARET: I lived here for a while, I’m very bad at it. I have a story about going to the store in the middle of the night, and for whatever reason was buying the biggest bottle of wine and condoms, and one of our patrons, now deceased, of course was like,

PATRON: “Whatcha got in the bag?”

MARGARET: I moved within like a month. (*Laughter*) ‘Cause that’s a perfectly normal small town question. I was like nope, nope. It was real.

DIANNE: My family has been here, gosh, back to, you know--I did a family history on both of my families--we’ve been planted here since like the 1800s. Both sides of my family--so my mom and my dad, born and raised in Knox County, Fredericktown area and then Marengo area, and they have raised their families and we’ve all lived here. Now I have two older sisters, they don’t live in Knox County, I’m the only one that came back home (*Laughter*) But that’s alright. That’s alright.

PATRICIA: Well as students my husband and I were here from 1969 to 1972 and then we went away for a year of grad school in Chicago. Sam was offered a job coming back to the college and working for the college, so we came back in 1973. We've been here ever since.

JOHN: I was born here, I was born at the old--the Knox County Hospital building used to be a building run by the nuns from Saint Vincent's, and that's where I was born. You know, so it's like I've always been a part of Mount Vernon, so I've seen these changes, I saw this restaurant change hands several times, and I've watched it run really downhill, and then we get it back.

RICHARD: I've been here since 1954. I moved here from Bucyrus, Ohio. I came here because I was employed by the local YMCA as a program director. It's basically, I think, a pretty conservative town. If you want action, you can go fifty miles down the road to Columbus

OLIVIA: This is my eighth year in Ohio. [My parents] were originally from Chicago, Illinois, they met there and I was born there. And then when I was about two or three, I think three, we ended up moving to Columbus, Ohio for job opportunities.

CAROL: My great grandmother came here with her family in 1911. They came to run the Bell Telephone, the new one that had just moved to Fredericktown.

MIKE: My grandmother's side, my mom's side, oh, they've been in Danville for long as I can ever remember. I think they originated from Germany. Now, my dad's side, my grandfather came from England when he was fifteen. He came over here by himself, and it was a family in Gambier that took him in. And raised him for a few years, and then

he went out on his own.

INTERVIEWER: And what brought him here?

MIKE: I think just opportunity. Just to come to the United States, and see what he could do.

CLAIRE: I understand my parents now. I never thought that would happen. You know when you are young, and you're angry, and you're like why do I live in Knox County! This place is so boring! I want to live somewhere like New York or LA! But, I don't know if it is because I am pretty rooted here, as far as growing up here, but there is a calmness and a maybe it's a false sense of safety. You know your kids can run free.

RICHARD: I'm proud to say I'm from Mount Vernon, because it has a good image. You talk to people from other communities and you say you're from Mount Vernon and they say, "Oh, yes, I know Mount Vernon!" And they make reference to this place or that place, and so on. So it's not your average town, a lot of people know about Mount Vernon. See, there's an interesting story, when I-71, before that was here or in the area, you have to picture, all the traffic went through Mount Vernon going from Cleveland to Columbus to Cincinnati, it was called the three C highway, and a lot of people went through here to get to other towns. Of course, then they became acquainted with it by virtue of going through and stopping at local restaurants, and they say, "Well is the Alcove still there?" I say, "Well, yes it is," having just reopened. And it's noted for things like that.

MARGARET: In thirty years, I've never met somebody who didn't have a positive response to Mount Vernon, and it's usually along the lines of, it's a beautiful little town. Because they drove through it. Their impression is uni-

formly positive, but so fleeting.

LET GO AND LET GOD

INTERVIEWER: What brought you back here?

CLAIRE: I had twins! (*laughter*) My husband at the time, we wanted to have children and we needed help, and it turned out the help worked! We were blessed with twins! But when they were born, they were born eight and a half weeks early, and so we spent a lot of time in the NICU. My mom was living with us in LA, she came out and moved in with us for six months, and at the end we were like, ya know, this isn't gonna work, I can't take two babies to auditions. So when we made the decision to come back, it was almost a big sigh of relief, and I don't have to pound the pavement anymore. And when they were born, your priorities do change, immediately. The day one of them came home from the NICU I got a callback for something big. It was for X-Men or something, something big, some small reporter role. And I didn't want to do it. And realizing at some point in your career, I'm auditioning for a reporter in this big movie -- I don't want to play reporters on a big movie. I want to act in the theater. This is not fun.

BOB: So, what happened was this. About a decade ago, two things happened at the same time. First thing, my wife and I had our first kid, Dance, who was in here working out back. What happens with that, I think for a lot of parents, is that they begin to rethink all kinds of things based upon, you're now in control of another human life. So everything that you do, every input you make, is going to affect the

outcome of an actual human being. So, that could be many things, but for us, specifically, the food system, or not the food system, but food in general. So we started with, and this is what got the whole ball rolling, we started with raw milk.

THERESA: Oh my god, I could talk so much about my son. He is turning six in 19 days he told me today (*laughter*). He is precocious and annoying and the best thing that's ever happened to me. I was 16 when I had him, I got pregnant at fifteen. That was a struggle. I had kind of gotten with his dad to get back at my ex girlfriend, and then we were two months into the relationship and I got pregnant.

BOB: We lived in Findlay Ohio at the time, and we began to research what raw milk is. Which really, all raw milk is, is not homogenized or pasteurized. So it hasn't been heated up like the milk you buy off the shelf, which basically kills all the bad stuff, which is why they do it, but at the same time, it also kills all the good stuff. So, we began to research what that meant and found a farm outside of Findlay that sold raw milk. And so, we started with that and we began to drink raw milk and we began to make our yogurt and our dairy products, some of the different things, our butter, and all that kind of stuff from raw milk.

CLAIRE: You know I always drank, pretty badly actually. But when I went to Los Angeles, there was this week, this two week period, where my boyfriend hadn't moved out [to LA] yet, and my mom had just left, and there was just this moment in that week when I realized that I could drink every night of my life. And I did. I never stopped. It was very lonely and isolating and you know I pushed away everyone. And what was so hard about it was, I was always extremely functional about it on the outside. And

you know up till 3 a.m. and I was at the gym at 5:30 a.m and I was at work at 7:30 a.m and smiling. And my boss would be like, "You're a rockstar, man!" And I was doing a lot of, drinking was the center, but there was a lot of pills and whatever was in front of me, and it's still hard to think about for real why. What could have happened if I wasn't drinking -- because I had *huge* opportunities, ya know? What if I was a hundred percent there, what if I wasn't always covering up everything, what if I wasn't always lying? But then I hit a rock bottom and in that rock bottom I ended up in the hospital and missed work the next day, and that was tragic for me, like oh my God. And, ya know, I ended up in the hospital because I was ninety two pounds and just every sip of alcohol I would be immediately drunk, I don't think I was ever sober for two years. I was always just a little drunk, but so focused. And then I called my mom who had just been out the week before visiting, she saw me in a play, and I said "I need help. I'm drowning."And she was on the plane the next morning. And she saved my life. My mom said what about staying with her sister, your Aunt Mary Pierce in Richmond for a while, and my aunt and her husband were sober, and it was like the clouds parted and you could see the kingdom of Heaven. It's crazy because I thought, how am I ever going to be happy again without my vices, but it really was probably the happiest month and a half of my life.

THERESA: We were just being stupid but I was a fifteen year old honors student, I had a plan for my life, and he kind of disrupted that whole plan. I still graduated with honors. I still did everything I wanted to do. It was hard. I mean really until the past two years I had a lot of resentment and struggle, I was kind of late to the party on getting on board with loving my kid so much. I am really honest about that lately. It was really hard for me to be a good

mom because I was like, “Look at all the other things I could be doing.” Now I’m like planning a birthday party and I’m so excited and every day he tells me about his day, and he has some behavior issues at school so we’re working on that, and we check in and I go to meetings and I’m very involved in his day to day, and we snuggle and it’s the best to snuggle.

BOB: Well then that leads to the next thing, which in our case was bread. Why is there so much gluten intolerance? Why is there, I mean, all these different questions that are out there, I’m a guy that dives to the bottom of everything, so I’m gonna go out and I’m gonna go as deep as you have to go; if that means that I need to buy a plot on Mars and raise a certain strain of wheat that is able to be digested by the populace, then that’s what I’m going to do. Well, I could talk for two hours on what it led to, but it just went from one thing to the next. And it was all based around the fact that we had a kid, and we were thinking, “Well what are we gonna feed this, this human being to make it the best version of itself that it can be?”

THERESA: I love being a mom, my life revolves around being a mom, and thats new-ish for me really. I’m a very anxious person. I have a lot of anxiety about a lot of things. I’m a worst case scenario thinker. I want [Andrew] to be as safe as possible for ever (*laughs*). It’s time to get him into team sports and one of my friends was like we should get him in dirt track racing, and I was like, “No that’s so dangerous!” Then I was thinking about all of the concussion rates and was just like, he’s gonna do theater. Then I was like a set could fall on him and then was back to the concussion thing (*laughs*). I just want him to be happy. That’s what I want for my son.

CLAIRE: I mean I want [my sons] to enjoy their time and growing up and I want them to be their own people and you know it's, how do I control them enough, but let them go enough to be their own people? I mean from the second they were in my belly I was like, "Oh my god, one of them is going to be an addict," ya know. [I just need to figure out,] how can I let go and let God?

THERESA: There's a lot of young single parents [here]. I've been really lucky. I went to a high school that had the GRADS program, I don't know what GRADS stands for but it's for pregnant and teenage parents in high school, to go through so they have a community, they have supports, they can have access to parenting classes and stuff like that. There were meetings you could go and just talking about the weird stuff that comes up, like living with your parents and being a parent, or figuring out being a parent is a big struggle. There's a lot of communities. There's a Facebook group, Knox County Mommies and you can ask questions, because being a parent, no matter how old you are, it's like, "My kid has this weird thing, what did you do? Did your kid have this thing?" There's a community for it here, but there's some judgement too, just with young parents in general, but I kind of don't surround myself with that and I've been lucky enough to have good friends.

BOB: Here's how to bring the full circle to this soliloquy: What we found out, as a husband and wife trying to buy food for our kids. We had to go to each farm to get those products. We found it all, it's out there, it's not like the product is not available, it is available. But, how do you get that, first of all, into the city, second of all to a dual income family where both the wife and the husband may work all day and don't have the time or the luxury to go out into the farms. But they want to make those choices, they

want to eat the way we were eating. So we developed this machine, that we called Yellowbird, and Yellowbird steps in and we go to the farms, which is why our warehouse is where it is. We're not a produce wholesaler in the middle of Columbus who'll say to the grower, "Yeah if you can bring your food to me, I can try to get rid of it and sell it, and then pay you back a portion of that price." Who can get the product to them if they're two hours outside of the city? So we came out--I knew I needed to be close to Columbus and I knew Knox County, so we said "We're gonna move to Mount Vernon, and then we're gonna go out and we're gonna find the growers."

CHILDHOOD

THERESA: My childhood was traditional and boring but also like everyone has weird childhood stuff. I grew up here, I was like one of three black people, or people of any color in my elementary school. That was really hard--I was like fat and black and super nerdy. I skipped first grade, and they wanted me to skip another grade but I had such a hard time with the social development. I just wasn't there, so we kept me there. I really struggled. Childhood's so heavy. I got diagnosed with a lot of mental health stuff at that age, it was like depression and ADHD and ADD, and as I've gotten older it's like bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder, kind of pinned stuff down like PTSD and stuff like that. I don't know. My family is a very tight knit family so even with all this stuff I got access to mental health stuff because my family--my mom at least was very attentive and knows her kids. I'm the only black person on my mom's side of the family. They're very big and Ital-

ian and were very close and everybody knows everything about everybody else.

CARL: Well, I was raised on a farm, it was just one of the things you got up and done everyday, and Dad was somewhat of a disciplinarian. (*laughter*) The animals required being taken care of before we were. As kids we always had chores to do, he would challenge us everyday:

DAD: "Did you put the fresh straw in the barn for the cows?"

CARL: "Yeah."

DAD:"Did you make sure the water tank was full?"

CARL: "Yeah."

DAD: Did you feed 'em their grain and hay?"

CARL:"Yeah." And if he found something we didn't do, and supper was on the table, we had to leave and go do it. The farm, the livestock, the welfare of the farm, come before us, and you don't see a lot of that anymore. People tend to care of themselves before they do their business. And that's why business fails. *(Rebecca gestures that she has something to say)* Yes Ma'am.

REBECCA: And then tell them -- farming really is in his blood. Tell them about the time you skipped kindergarten, what did you do?

CARL: At that time my father was employed by my eldest brother and he was on the road in a cheap welfare service and the next brother down was sixteen, he was basically in charge of running the farm. And we need to take care of hay that day, it was in late May. So mom sent me down

to the school bus and my brother intervened at the corner of the house and said "No, you come with me, I got somethin' for you to do." At five years old I'm raking hay with a tractor with no one else around. *(laughter)* I didn't get in trouble but my brother... is not quite so fortunate at the end of the day. *(laughter)* But there's a lot of what we do on the farm that seem very peculiar to non-agriculture people, but it's one of those things, it's like "Yeah, we've always done it, and why not?" That attitude is changing over the years. Unfortunately with agriculture it's, "This is the way I do things, it's none of your business." That's not true anymore. It's everybody's business. So we've got to change our ways.

PATRICIA: When I was growing up my mom was available all the time to come in [to school]. I mean I just assumed. I remember in fifth grade raising my hand and saying, "Yes my mother can make fortune cookies." She didn't know how to make fortune cookies! *(Laughter)* But you know somehow the fortune cookies came right into school. My father was a driver salesman for Sunbeam Bread and so he went to the grocery stores and had different customers around that he would go to. I try to remember what his schedule was because it amazes me. He'd get up at 4:30 in the morning, go into his bread route, and come home around 2:30 in the afternoon. Lie down for about a half an hour, and then he had a carpentry business that he would go to people's homes and redo their kitchens, redo their bathrooms, build garages and things like that. And so he would get home about 11:30 and the next day wake up and start the whole process. So he was a really really hard worker. That is another value that was instilled in me, the importance of hard work, and that things don't come easily, that you have to work hard for something that you end up valuing.

THERESA: I love telling people I'm Italian because it surprises people and I live for that surprise. I'm always like, "Yeah, I'm Italian I know I look it" *(laughs)*. Hair is a big thing for me. My mom really did her best to figure out what to do with my hair. She wanted to let it be natural and I always wanted it straightened. Really I didn't notice at home, I noticed [my color] a lot more in the community. We had a couple of instances of just really mean kids, that was a big part of not having friends in elementary school, and just being really aware of being other. I spent a lot of time self hating and really struggling with wanting to be white, or just not black. But I grew up with a tight knit family, we are huggers, I have an aunt that kisses people on the mouth which is very stressful *(laughs)*. Everybody has a good sense of humor, we've had a lot of hard stuff happen, but through all of it we are all very close, and I know I say that a lot but my mom talks to my grandma like every other day. She lives down the road, she babysits my son. Family is there for family.

FISH OR CUT BAIT

DIANNE: My parents are still in the area, my husband's parents are still in the area. They're all retired, and so, quite honestly my husband and I would not be able to do what we do if we did not have four grandparents who were completely retired and willing to literally raise our children from infancy to now. Because they did. It was amazing. Our children were both really very unexpected, not planned, so that kind of threw a hitch into things. I got pregnant with our son a couple months into opening this business—oops! Yeah, and to tell your business partners,

"I'm pregnant, and I'm gonna be off for a little while in about nine months, oh no, sorry about that." So after our second son my mom had said to me, she's like, "I don't know whether I can raise any more children." *(Laughter)* And I said, "I know, I hear ya, I'm done, one of each—we're good, you know, I'm happy." So our parents have been huge blessings to us, because they also have a great relationship with their grandchildren too, and that's been really really cool to see happen.

CARL: When I was still in high school, I worked at a manufacturing facility in town--well we all gotta have gas money (*laughter*) and Dad wasn't gonna give it to me! So I worked in a manufacturing facility in Mount Vernon and I come home one night, it was ten o'clock and he was still awake and I thought, "That's kinda odd, something must be wrong," and I said "What's up?" and he said

DAD: "Mom and I decided, we're going to retire. We're gonna sell the farm, unless you want to farm."

CARL: I'm a senior in high school. I said, "Oh… how soon do you want an answer?"

DAD: "I'd like to have it by Monday morning."

CARL:This was Thursday. *(laughter)* So, come Monday it's time to fish or cut bait. So I made the decision to invest my life into agriculture. I put in my two weeks' notice at the factory and I've been here ever since.

DIANNE: So, this business that we're sitting in right now—Foster's East Side Pharmacy—is owned by myself and two other business partners, and we've had this business for, it'll be eleven years in May. We share the same name as all the Foster's, there are three Foster's Pharma-

cies. We all came from the same store, which would be our Foster's on West High Street. So we all kind of grew up there. That's where I started working in 1995 as a sales clerk. [I worked] through high school and through college. Then, just worked my way up, and then this opportunity of owning this store came to myself and my other two business partners in about 2004.

JOHN: We kinda got into, like, preserving restaurant legacies here, in central Ohio. The Athens [Greek Restaurant] was originally owned by a Greek couple that, you know they were getting older and decided to sell. But the legacy is there for them, so they were happy to know that, you know, their traditions and recipes are gonna live on. And, everyday people walk in and then they see someone they know and then it ends up being a table joining or, like "Hey, oh my gosh," and then they're standing in the way for half an hour as they talk to people.

PATRICIA: I am retired now but what I did for thirty-five years was teach. I always knew I wanted to do something that involved children. I just had an attachment to that kind of thing. In high school, I volunteered at the local Head Start. I worked in afterschool programs with younger kids. So I knew I wanted to do something with children.

JAMES: Looking back to my years in high school, my goal was to get out of high school and work in a factory. I had no intentions of going into law enforcement. None. I was always into trouble (*laughter*). Nah, I wasn't in trouble. But really, that never crossed my mind until I got out and worked in a factory, and seen that the sheriff's office had this program that you could work part time and you wore the same uniform as a regular guy did. I thought, that looks pretty nice I think I'm gonna try it out. So that

happened, and the bus factory that I was working at was getting a little bit shaky and the mayor of this town, he says, "Why don't you come and work for me?" I thought, I don't know, but I came here and said, "If I last 30 days it's gonna be good." Didn't know it would be thirty-five years *(laughter).* I did not go to college. You ain't gonna believe this, but when I joined the sheriff's office you didn't have to have any school. He'd swear you in and he'd give you your badge and you'd go out and ride with him.

JAMES: I think some places [the police are] getting carried away, I admit it. Prime example, Cleveland, why would [they] shoot, now tell me, I might be wrong, there were one hundred shots at a guy trying to outrun them. There were seventy or one hundred shots. Why? Why would you shoot that many times? That just doesn't make sense. But on some of the other stories, I think you're only getting the one side of it, you're not gettin' the whole story of what happened. The news is not gonna play both sides of it. I shouldn't say they're not, but I found out a lot of times there's three sides [to a story]. Your side, their side, and what happened. You go to domestics and its, "He hit me." "No he hit me!" And it's who hit who, you know. When I first started, it was hard to arrest someone for domestic violence, now if you don't arrest someone for domestic violence, you better have good document for why you didn't arrest someone. You know, you have to try to figure out who is the aggressor and sometimes it's hard to do.

RICHARD: Well, my major was in physical education and with a minor also in sociology, so the two fit together naturally. So I graduated from Otterbein College in '52 and I finished schooling on deferment from being drafted. Then as soon as I graduated, Uncle Sam wanted me, so I went into the service in the following September. And then

when I was discharged the following June I went right to my employer office at Otterbein College, and they gave me some leads and then one of them was the YMCA, and it led me to Mount Vernon.

THERESA: Within the next five years I'd like to be in Columbus at least--that's a step away before I'm out of state! I'm gonna be in Mount Vernon for probably the next couple of years but it's not something I want long term. I would like to go back and get my bachelors in social work. I finally figured out all of the things I like to do can be done by helping people, and I'm in two social work jobs right now, so I'd like to go back and get my BSW and eventually an MSW, and then I was thinking Dr. Brown sounded really nice *(laughs)*. I want to find somewhere that I can make an impact, and I think that's important to show my son too--you can have something super hard handed to you and make something really great out of it.

PATRICIA: I think one of the advantages of being in a smaller community is that it's a pretty easy place to stay in touch with people. I know my children from time to time would say, "Mom, do you know every girl that waitresses!" *(laughter)* cause I run into somebody that I had taught and they had a summer job at Bob Evans or something like that. And I think that's wonderful. It's really neat to be able to see kids grow up and take off.

WE WORRY THAT THE WORLD CHANGED

MARGARET: We worry that the world changed, and libraries don't get the same kind of use. So--

CAROL: Libraries are in a weird place right now, we're sort of trying to find ways to be more useful in the future.

MARGARET: We keep coming back to that word weird. It's just, cause you gotta sorta -- somebody comes in and asks a question and our next response is, how ignorant are you? In a loving way. *(CAROL laughs)* [Like when you] go into a hardware store, you know, they gotta figure out, do you actually know what a screw is?

CAROL: We have a large number of computer illiterate people in our county. That's not anything new to us, it's constantly people who don't have email addresses, people who don't know how to turn a computer on, people who don't know how to get on the internet, like, literally things like that. They're not all Amish. More older people who just refuse to use the internet, which, I don't know, if you've never had to use it. And we're generally the second people they've been to who have told them they can't tell them what they need.

MARGARET: On a horrible horrible day in their life. If you're lookin' for emergency custody of your grandkid--

CAROL: Oh yeah, nothing good has happened to you.

MARGARET: --many things have gone bad.

CAROL: And now no one will help you.

MARGARET: Yeah, so we try to be kind. [But] nobody loves you, and I say this to people all the time, nobody loves you when you say you need to talk to an attorney.

CAROL: I was just reading an article in library journal that was saying that libraries exist to help raise people to a common level. So say you don't have online access, it's to

help close that gap, you know, so the information isn't kept for the rich people.

MARGARET: Americans hate talking about class, class is huge. If your mom and dad have enough money to get you an electronic device, they will do that, and if they don't, you can't. And so that's one of the reasons we have two iPads down there?

CAROL: Four.

MARGARET: Four. I bought em, I should know.

CAROL: *(Laughter)* She did buy them.

MARGARET: They're always in somebody's hands.

CAROL: There's four iPads and two computers in the teen Makerspace, for teen's use only, so that they don't have to be with the adults, they don't have to deal with adult things.

RICHARD: There was a time, the YMCA was the place for youth when I came to Mount Vernon. And we built a new building four years after I came here, started the construction of a new building, and it just grew leaps and bounds. It was the entertainment center, you might say, the place for all activities for youth. That has changed considerably, because change is inevitable, and a lot of other things have come into the community and filled voids that the Y was trying to fill. But that's okay because YMCA basically is so versatile that if the needs are being met by somebody else then that opens the door for them to venture into new activities. And their big activities today is pre-school. I didn't have that at all in the sixties and early seventies.

PATRICIA: When I started out we weren't feeding kids

breakfast in schools and now we're feeding kids breakfast, and a lot of times a free lunch and maybe there's even a snack in the afternoon, you know. I think families have been stretched really far and they're, you know, a lot of times doing the very best they can, [but now the schools take on a lot of that responsibility too. It's more than just teaching.]

KATHY: In 1999, there was a group of concerned Christian people who wanted to provide a place for kids to be. You have to understand in Mount Vernon there wasn't too much to do. When I came here the kids would drive downtown, and take up all the parking spots and sit on the tops of their cars. So the people that were concerned about the kids started looking for a place. They started meeting in '99, and on June 5th, 2000 they rented the storefront we were in for 16 years. My sons, I have four children, but my twin sons are 30 and they started attending The Escape Zone when they were 14, when it opened. I used to send them down there, and then sometimes I would go down and pick them up, and end up going in and talking to the people that were there. One day they said, "Hey you wanna volunteer?" I said, "Yeah," and it wasn't too long before I became the staff coordinator.

SMALL TOWN LIFE

OLIVIA: I think some [of my friends] would [want to come back after college], but some I think are into the whole city life, and like this is a very small town and they want to go see something more than what Mount Vernon has to offer. [But here, people are very friendly]. You see people down

the street, say hello, opening doors for people, just common generosity towards others. Personally, I would like to go like in the middle, not like city life -- city life but not like small town life.

CLAIRE: I remember when we actually moved back, and I took the time to notice, you would walk down the streets and people would look you in the eye! And say, "hello!" That was like the best thing in the world and I realized in LA, part of my drinking story is you're so unconnected. Everybody's in a hurry and nobody is looking each other in the eye and says hi down the street, and when they do, it is noticed and the person's probably on drugs, ya know. [...] It is just the warmth here. You do feel like a community is raising your children. You know, it's really nice.

JAMES: I like being there sometimes when people come in and pay their water bill. People will come in and pay their water bill and I'll joke with them and talk to them and they'll walk out and I'll say, "Who was that? I don't know who that was." Doesn't make any difference. I don't care. I just like to mingle with the people. I like small town, you can come in here, you've got work in the office to do. You come in, you do your work, then you can go back out on the road, drive around, give some autographs out if you want to *(laughter)*.

DIANNE: One of the big advertising initiatives that we did for the business a number of years ago were billboards, you know, we had billboards all over the county with our faces on it. And so my face was on a billboard for so long, with my dad, and people would identify you. And then it dawned on me that, my face is on a billboard, in a couple places. Cause sometimes I get really frustrated, like if I'm in the grocery store, thinking, you know, I have got to con-

trol my temper because this face is on lots of billboards, and I own a business. *(Laughter)* Or, if my husband gets frustrated in the car, or if I get frustrated in the car, and we might honk at someone, "I'm like, no no no, don't honk! I'm on a billboard!" *(Laughter)*

CARL: We hosted an exchange student from Germany, and once we got her from the airport out in the country, it was becoming more and more obvious she's very nervous, like "Where's the houses?" *(laughter)* Well, they're scattered out. And, gee, was it the first night, she wanted to know when the bus would come and take her to town? *(laughter)*

REBECCA: She said, "What time does the bus come?"

CARL: Yeah. [S]he was thinking there would be a bus to pick her up to go shopping.

REBECCA: Like they do there, you know, where she'd been, busses came by and took them wherever they needed to go… Well, sorry! She never got used to our lifestyle because she came from a lifestyle where they partied all the time, you know, they were constantly on the go, and we're not and we don't, and I think it was difficult for her to spend a whole year not partying. Our kids did 4-H, and we worked on the farm, you know, we went to church. That was about it.

CARL: A quick [story]: retired Judge Ronk, in our court systems, made a statement the other day, that I was just going, "Wow, I'd never thought about it." He was juvenile judge. He said, "I have never had a young individual in my courtroom that exhibited livestock at the County Fair." He said, "Those kids have a purpose, they know what responsibility is, they know what consequences is." And I find that amazing that I had never put that together.

KENYON

CLAIRE: My love of Knox County is the same and combined -- I love Kenyon College, I mean talk about community and small, and everybody walking down the street, and everybody knows everybody and their dog, ya know. It is great. I'm very happy to be back in Knox County and also Gambier.

JAMES: I used to work Kenyon college. Kenyon used to have dances all the time. I worked it as a deputy. Special detail down there. Well, it would be nothing unusual to get two trash cans full of alcohol. They would come in and we loved it, and we knew this was gonna happen. You'd see them come in with these big hats on, and we'd say, "What you got in that hat?" They'd say, "Nothing." Raise it up and they got a big six-pack falling out *(laughter)*. It was a nice college. I've attended some special things they've put on and I enjoyed it. I like Kenyon.

BOB: I met John Marsh from Kenyon early. Went in and met him two winters ago, and told him, "I'm hiring you because of what you know that I don't, and your connections and the way that you've built the local foods program for Kenyon." So, the cool thing about that is with Kenyon, and the position that they take, we're able to buy six hundred dollar-bunches worth of carrots, fill up the CSAs for the week, and have a buffer so that if the product's bad and we have to throw away one bunch, or we get extra people that week, or less people that week, there's always a play in how much we're ordering. So being able to then take that food and push it through something like that--and it can't just be Kenyon, we're designing what we're designing to be able to take what Kenyon has done and go to Oberlin,

and go to Wooster, and go to Denison, and go to these other places that want and have the ability to do that. What we've done is just the tip of the iceberg.

JOHN: We do delivery out to Kenyon, things like that, where, it's kinda like, you know with Kenyon or the Naz you're gonna have people that are coming from areas that have [Greek food] and it's not scary to them. So it's not like a midwest college or something like that where they've never seen anything but corn. So it's very easy, we can take our stuff out there and sell it, and people know exactly what it is and that helps too.

DIANNE: Both Kevin and I grew up in Mount Vernon, we were involved in Kenyon, yeah, we knew about Kenyon. We took Kenyon for granted, honestly, we took Gambier for granted. We hung out in Gambier all the time as we grew up, and we loved Kenyon for just bein' this, eh, it's Gambier, you know, not everyone has the experience of having a Kenyon College within five minutes of them. And so, now living out in Gambier, in the country, I value that so much more, and I'm so thankful that our children go to Wiggin Street because they have opportunities there that, unfortunately some of the other schools in Mount Vernon don't have.

PATRICIA: When I went to college, I mean Kenyon was just a revelation for me. In my class there were only seventeen women. I think at the beginning with women, you know, there were difficult things that happened. But it was growing pains, you know. We got through that and now it seems to me [that there is a] very healthy and natural interaction with men and women [at Kenyon. But when I went there, there were so many little things. I don't remember being super angry about it, I mean I suppose

there were things we should've been angry about. And I have to say it wasn't just fellow students, which was the most disheartening thing. It was the professors themselves sometimes who said very disappointing things. The kinds of comments that I remember -- one art professor I had wrote on the ceiling of one of the art class rooms, he had just presented a session on how to structure canvas, and on the ceiling he wrote, "A canvas is like a woman. Dot Dot Dot." Because it's very pesky to stretch your own canvas. I don't know if you've ever that before or not, but it's very pesky. And so yeah, that was just kind of disappointing but I didn't come from a background where I felt like if I didn't like this I could stand up and voice my opposition to it. I think I learned that, as we went along, but I wasn't quite there. Yet.

CLAIRE: There's some distance, I know from growing up and I think there are those that think that the whole Gambier community is very snotty. You know, they are on the hill. What I like about the position I'm at, because I still feel very tied to Knox County, you know my dad he's a businessman in Knox County so, I like feeling connected to both and I have a feeling that that is not always the case.

THERESA: We play a game called Kenyon or Naz *(laughs)*. It's a really fun past time and you can tell if someone's coming out of the antique store it's really a toss up, it depends on if they're wearing a beanie or not. That's a Naz student *(laughs)*. Sometimes you can point at them and be like, he's a Naz student and he wants to be a youth pastor. It's just that kind of other. I had some friends who went to Kenyon so that kind of changed a little bit. It was, a lot of Kenyon kids are rich and they don't wear shoes and they don't know how to use a crosswalk *(laughs)*. I think that's like colleges in general. That was the big annoyance. A lot

of people in Knox County think Kenyon people look down on us so we in return look down on Kenyon. "Oh, they're too good for us and we're not gonna have that." Once I talked to my friends they were like, "It's a lot of people on scholarship." It's not all "Everybody's paid for, and everybody's parents pay for them, and it's all a bunch a liberals," you know. It's different and it's hard to figure out where you connect because a lot of people are like, "Oh, every nine months and then they're gone again," and what does that do to a community? What does that look like?

PATRICIA: I think Kenyon has always been perceived that way by the community. Even now I think if you try to tell somebody there are very conservative minds in the Poli Sci department for example they won't believe you. I think it's maybe it's… Well I don't know how to say this in a nice way. I'll try, I'll just try to say it. The students look different or maybe they have a fashion that hasn't come to Mt. Vernon yet *(laughter)* or maybe they behave in a different way or maybe they're, you know, they're just different. Maybe sometimes Mount Vernon just doesn't quite know how to handle that. [A]gain I think this has gotten so much better.

THE VIEWPOINT

OLIVIA: At first, when I first came here, I was a very shy little girl who didn't want to talk with anyone type deal, so when people that came up to me and ask me questions, that like forced me to open up a little bit more. The question they always ask is:

FRIEND: Teach me something in Spanish, say something in Spanish!

OLIVIA: And it's like, "Well what do you want me to say?" And often it's curse words that I don't really want to do type of deal. So that, and then the whole thing with the quinceañera thing, the coming of age when you turn fifteen. And I was fortunate enough that my parents provided that for me. And that was another thing where they were like,

FRIEND:"Why do you do that? What's the difference between that and a sweet sixteen?"

INTERVIEWER: Do you mind having to be the person who explains things like that all the time?

OLIVIA: I love it! *(Laughter)* It is always fun to share your views with someone else. More often than not they're extremely excited to learn something new, so I think that's always nice.

THERESA: Facebook's a big part of my life--that's kind of where the LGBTQ community comes in, and black people. I don't know black people around here, I am my own black friend. That was my way to connect, [and] through a queer selfie group that I also moderate. Mental health groups -- there's a group for everything and I'm in all of them. That community has helped me and that's kind of how I've parented too--I don't want my son to find a community online, in his twenties, to not have something he can relate to.

OLIVIA: Okay, so ever since about the age of eight years old I was like, "I want to be a lawyer." And so I told my parents about it and they were like, "Really, are you sure

about that? That's risky, even for us"--because you know immigrants and all that stuff. And I was like, "You know what, yeah." I don't want to keep the little cliche that lawyers are liars and all that and I want to make a difference in that aspect.They like came here illegally at first from Mexico. So they have this fear of the law and law enforcement and getting involved with government, that's why they were hesitant to even consider something like that for me.

THERESA: The first time I'd ever been out with a girl in public in my community, people like knew me back then, but they didn't know me the way I've made myself a public face now. But I was nervous to hold her hand going into Tim Hortons, I wasn't sure, it was very much a panic. Like I'm the big "out" one and she was still in the closet at home, and I was like, should we hold hands? Is that ok? What do we do if someone says something? That kind of surprised us both, but I haven't had too many issues and now I'm very like out, but I'm not out at work. I'm out to my immediate co-workers in my department but like my supervisor doesn't know. I don't care if they find out, I don't think my job is in jeopardy, but it doesn't really come up.

MARGARET: I have bright pink hair, Special Effects Atomic Pink. Used to do Manic Panic, the mother of us all, but this is better. After I did breast cancer, my hair came back different, and it was very, it's white but it's very light, and I wanted, for a lot of reasons, to stand out. And here I know that I'm representing the library in some really deep ways, and it's working for me. People remember me. People start conversations with me. Like I said, I'm something of an introvert, and the hair forces me out into the world. Next week we will go to Columbus and talk to our legislators and say, "Please do not cut us," seriously, and they'll

remember me. It's worth it.

OLIVIA: It's hard cause you grow up and then you're thrown into a place where you're the only one. And you're like, "What if I'm not like them?" And it goes into this whole thing where their parents have already gone to college and it's like, I haven't. It's hard. Sometimes it's like the music taste. Cause I like to listen to music in Spanish and they're talking about Drake and Rihanna and it's like, I can't relate! *(Laughter)* You grow up with two different mindsets. You grow with the American mindset and with a Mexican mindset. And sometimes you find yourself not being American enough or sometimes you find yourself not being Mexican enough. So you have to learn to combine both into one. I think that that is a biggie. Still learning about both and understanding every little detail of both is what makes you a better person.

THERESA: There hasn't been a very prominent LGBTQ community [here]. I've never really connected, and I don't necessarily feel [completely] safe being out. It was a cool thing to connect on Facebook. It's kind of been unintentional networking. I haven't done as much as I want to do with it. I would like events, I would like to have picnics and meet and have a space, but with this election it's been kind of scary to go in public and say we're gonna have a queer picnic (*laughter*).

IF YOU BELIEVE IT, IT WORKS

OLIVIA: I grew up Catholic so like certain things, like how would I describe it? Being influenced with the cross

on the wall or a picture of the last supper in the kitchen and then praying before bed thing. [I feel the strongest sense of Latino community] in church. Because every last Sunday of the month they do it in Spanish, and that's where everybody goes and it feels more comfortable.

KATHY: I grew up in the Nazarene church. I was kind of one of those kids that somebody picks up and takes to church, because my parents did not go. I had a regular teenage life where my brother did drugs, and I drank and I caroused around -- I was probably the girl most likely, but my sister ended up pregnant instead of me *(laughter)*. I graduated in three years out of highschool, was saved when I was in vacation bible school, but truly committed when I was about fifteen, so then came to Mount Vernon and met my husband in May of '74 and we got married in July of '74.

CAROL: Neither of us are very religious people, in a very religious community. So that's kind of strange. Mainly because, I'm sure you're aware of this, we have more Christian denominations than I knew was possible in one area. Just in Mount Vernon there's something like twenty-seven or twenty-eight Christian denomination churches, just in town. In Fredericktown, I live right in the middle of town. There is the Presbyterian [church] directly across the street from my house. Down the block from Presbyterian is the Nazarene. On the other side behind my house is the Baptist, what is next to the Baptist? There is a Masonic lodge right next to the Baptist church. And then if you go to the high school there is a Methodist next to the high school, and then a Church of God directly across the street. That is only the churches in town, there are more churches out in the country.

KATHY: There's probably at least 104 churches in Knox County. There were at one point seventy youth pastors.

MARGARET: And being unchurched in this community, you're missing a big layer.

CAROL: There's a lot of community involvement you miss if you aren't a member of the churches, mainly because people don't know who you are. Most of the things that involve town involve churches.

KATHY: [At the Escape Zone] we don't have a sit down everybody's gonna listen to the message kinda thing. God brings us kids at the right time. A couple weeks ago we had a brand new volunteer, she was standing down there at the end of the hallway. A young lady has a panic attack. So of course her friends get right in her face, "She's having a panic attack!!" I said, "Well get away from her then, let's deal with that!" *(laughter)*. Angie, her daughter had panic attacks, and she went over to her and said, "Can I pray with you? My daughter used to have panic attacks." She takes a minute to pray with her and she's okay. That's how we incorporate God. No one bangs people over the head with a bible, but we take time to pray.

CARL: Okay—my wife is a devout Catholic, she'll go to church seven times a week if she can. I am not. But I do believe in Christ. We differ in that, and we allow each other to differ in that, and we don't challenge it. I don't feel the necessity to go to church when I can talk to God when I'm on the tractor or walking through the fields.

REBECCA: I have evolved so much over the years. I was born into St. Vincent, my whole family was Catholic and I was born into that, so I was baptized there, first communion, confirmation, all of it. And living here, that's where

I've gone all my life. I think I could count on one hand the times I've missed Sunday mass, not because I had to, because I love it. I need it. And that's kind of what fuels me, I know that I need that affirmation every week. And more, if I can get it. Just that time.

CAROL: My parents, in the nicest way possible, they're large hippies. Big hippies, always have been. They're weird to this area anyway. We grew up, we were allowed to attend any church we wanted, you know, that's how they were. They weren't gonna go with us, but we were allowed to go with friends or whatever. The problem is growing up in Fredericktown, which is a really small town, everyone knew my family, and everyone knew my parents. So, it was generally thought by most of the people that I went to highschool with--not the people I went to highschool with, their parents--that we worshipped satan. I was not allowed to hang out with a lot of people in my highschool because we worshipped satan. It was basically because we didn't attend a church. I actively did not make NHS because I did not go to church. I was number six in my class, and debate team, speech club, student director of the plays, all sorts of crazy [stuff], the swim team -- didn't go to church, did not make NHS. My father, who was a National Merit Scholar in the same town also did not make NHS. My brother who was, he had a much harder class, he was like tenth, but he graduated with people who were doctors by the time they were twenty--he also did not make NHS for the exact same reason.

KATHY: We really only live off the donations and the generosity of the people in the churches, and the people who had been involved at The Escape Zone over the years. Three times [in 2008] we did not have enough money to pay the rent. I was in Kentucky and I received an email

from the treasurer he said, “We only have money for half the rent what are we gonna do.” I put out an email to my prayer chain, “We don’t have enough money for rent, pray.” I came home on a Sunday and I was in my sweats and stuff but we used to have Sunday night church, so I went over to Sunday night church, and the head of the missions society said, “Kathy we want you to come up here.” I was thinking, “I’m in my sweatpants I don’t wanna be up on the stage!” But he called me up and he said, “We wanna give you one thousand five hundred dollars for The Escape Zone.” So he gave us a check for one thousand five hundred dollars, paid the rent, and half of the next month’s rent. That’s how God took care of us.

CARL: Everything is about belief. I talked to a fellow cattle producer yesterday, and this is funny, he said,

FRIEND: “I just weaned my calves,”

CARL: And he said,

FRIEND: “They got along this year the best they’ve ever done...They don’t run around and beller, they’ve calmed down, they’re eating feed, they’re content.”

CARL: Usually when you wean animals you go through a week of discomfort for yourself because they’re screaming their heads off till they can’t scream anymore. And he says,

FRIEND: “I don’t know what I done different!”

CARL: So I looked it up on the internet, and I called him back and I said, “You weaned them at the perfect time of the moon phase.” And he’s going,

FRIEND: “What?”

CARL: I said, “Yeah, there’s a phase of the moon where you wean animals, you wean babies. You nailed it right on the head.” He says,

FRIEND: “I don’t believe in that.”

CARL: I said, “Okay. You don’t have to believe in it. But I believe in it, that’s the only time I wean animals, I castrate animals, I do it by the sign of the moon and we’ve got along very very well.” So he called me back a little bit later and he said,

FRIEND: “Are you sure there’s something to this?”

CARL: I said, “No, I’m not sure about anything,” but I said, “Part of it is believing.” I said, “You just had a hip replaced, a year ago. And you believed in your mind that it was the best thing for you. And you recovered from it quite well. Now, if you’d went in there with a different mindset of saying, ‘This isn’t gonna work, I’m gonna be crippled for life,’ you’d still be limping.” So I said, “Believing is the key to everything.” And for religion, yeah. If you believe, it works, and if you don’t believe it doesn’t.

INTERMISSION

ACT 2

WHAT HAPPENED TO MY CHOICE?

RICHARD: If you go back into the early history there was a lot of industry here, locally owned industry. That's not true today, the industries here today you see are big corporations with headquarters elsewhere.

CARL: I work at Siemens Energy in Mount Vernon, which used to be Rolls-Royce, which used to be Cooper Industries, which used to be Cooper Energy, which used to be Cooper-Bessemer. *(laughter)* I was very fortunate to get a job in Mount Vernon back in 1988, [and] I've been there ever since. I've never been laid off a day in my life. It's been very very good to me. If they shut the doors tomorrow I can hold my head high and say, "Thank you for what you've done for me." There's no guarantee in any job. But to go back to what you're asking there, I cannot think of any farm out there today that does not have supplemental income. Either the spouse works, they've got oil and gas wells, they're retired and on social security, they sell seed corn on the side, or they do farm repairs for their neighbors. I can not think of one farm in Knox County that does not take in money as an off-farm income.

MIKE: I am an assembler. Oil and gas industry. We build units that go all over the world. We build units for offshore drilling for oil and gas, they're big units, they're one-ten plus, they're really big units. Yeah, they're huge. I've worked there since 1979. While I was in school, Mom

worked at the bank in Danville, and Dad worked for Pittsburgh Plate Glass, here in Mount Vernon. And then in '74, the year I graduated, Pittsburgh Plate shut down. They moved the factory. They just closed the factory, and then my parents moved to Meadville, Pennsylvania. There's a plant in Meadville, and Dad and Mom were there for, I don't know, three years maybe. And things just weren't working out there, he was laid off an awful lot out there. So he moved to Texas, Wichita Falls, Texas. In fact, down in Wichita Falls, Texas, there's a little suburb called Burkburnett. And they called it "Little Mount Vernon." There were so many families that made the move from Mount Vernon to Texas. And they were down in Texas probably, oh gosh, five or six years I suppose. And then Dad retired disability—his back. But yeah, he worked at Pittsburgh Plate Glass. It was an old factory, and they went to what they called float glass, and it's a newer type, where they made glass, and they just shut down the plant in Mount Vernon, and he had to do something. So he moved, he had to move.

PATRICIA: Well Howard [Sacks] has a group of us working on, what are we calling it? "Learning Trails" [for Ariel Foundation Park]. And so part of that project was sitting down with folks who had worked at PPG and taking their oral histories. One of the men I interviewed had worked fifty years or so. When the PPG plant here closed he went with PPG in Pennsylvania. But he started at age sixteen and it was really hair raising to listen to, first of all, how grateful he was for a job. He said when he got his first paycheck, he didn't know there was that much money in the world. He had come from West Virginia where people were out of work. His whole family have been out of work, and so at seventeen to get this paycheck.The other very impressive thing to me was the safety measures that were not in place, that people were routinely cut, that the floor

was sticky sometimes, he said, with blood. But that people were still just so grateful to have a job.

JOHN: We have a lot of industry still here in town, where there's Ariel Foundation--or Ariel Company--the leader in what they do, with the compression fittings and all that. So where that stuff is going, it's made in Mount Vernon, but it's put to use in, you know, deserts in the Middle East, in the rainforest in the Amazon basin, things like that. So these people are coming here to see their equipment, they're training on the equipment here. Like my uncle, he works for Siemens, and in three months he's been in Italy and Serbia and Russia, you know, talking to them. He's going [to] South America, he's going to Brazil, you know, he's selling components for energy plants and things like that. So, you know, the middle of Ohio is a pretty interesting place with all of this stuff happening. Any other place you wouldn't see such international crowd this far from a major hub, so it's kinda interesting.

MIKE: You're limited [here]. The higher-paying jobs are gone. Ariel pays pretty well, and they have good retirement going for them. But other than Ariel, the jobs are just not high-paying.

INTERVIEWER: Where do you think that industry and those high-paying jobs are going?

MIKE: Well ours is going overseas. My particular job is going to Norway where we build in Trents right now. And then they bought a plant in New York. They're still building some gas and oil stuff in New York. And Houston, they're doing some work in Houston, Texas. Siemens is a German company. And they have an awful lot of their assets over there, across the pond. Siemens is a very large company. They're huge. If you go to Disney you'll see Sie-

mens stuff. Their lighting display down there is Siemens. I mean, they're just into everything.

CAROL: [The biggest problem in this community is] jobs. Lack of higher income.

MARGARET: Well, and jobs--

CAROL: Cause I wouldn't say, like, we need more fast food. No, we need stuff--

MARGARET: High paying jobs.

CAROL: Middle class jobs.

MARGARET: Middle class jobs for people with minimal education that are sturdy.

CAROL: Long term.

MARGARET: Long term, with good benefits. When I grew up, halfway between Cleveland and Akron, my peers were the grandchildren of immigrants, and all their daddies worked in factories, everybody had a nice car, everybody had a big boat.

CAROL: And that's back when factories paid enough to live.

MARGARET: Right, but there was money rolling through, and my peers knew they had a choice. They could do that thing, or they could go to college, and they got out. But they had that choice, and I think a lot of people are deeply confused; What happened to my choice?

MIKE: I think [this is] turning into a retirement community more than anything else. There's still some industry in Mount Vernon, but the high-paying jobs are about gone.

There's lots of jobs for ten dollars an hour, twelve dollars an hour, but it's hard to raise a family in Mount Vernon on ten or twelve dollars an hour.

CAROL: What I'm running up against is, and you guys will be too, you know, no one over sixty-five feels like they can retire. Lots of them lost their pensions in 2008, which means that people in jobs that should have been open to people who are about forty now aren't open to them. Which means that they have the middle jobs, that they can't leave now either, but they should be in the higher jobs. Well, so, people thirty and under get the low entry jobs and can never move up, because no one else can go anywhere either. That makes it really hard when you're trying to pay back student loans, or buy a house, buy a car, any of those things.

MARGARET: Have a kid.

CAROL: Have a kid.

MARGARET: Any of those expensive hobbies.

MIKE: A big percent [of Siemens employees] will try to stay in the area, I think. There'll be some that'll leave. I would say, it depends on their age. You know, if you get a guy or a woman, whichever the case may be, thirty-five, forty years old, they've got a lot of years to work yet. And they're raising a family, and it takes lots to raise a family. So I'd look for them to go where the work's at, which, they may have to relocate. But if you get somebody my age, they're gonna hang around. Them, they can work for ten or twelve bucks an hour, or fourteen, whatever, and get by. 'Cause their families are raised. Future of Mount Vernon, they can't keep losing industry. I mean, you lose industry, you lose people. And businesses struggle, and I

think, if you don't make a lot of money, you're not going to eat out a lot, and things is going to change. Siemens is a big employer. Huge. Seven or eight hundred people. And it's gonna go down to not very many. They're closing production in September. They're trying to get some new business in, but Mount Vernon is not close to an interstate. There's no interstate close for transport or anything. That's one thing that worked against the Mount Vernon plan, it's the location.

A DIFFERENT TYPE OF SAFETY

REBECCA: Well, I can tell you when we were growing up, when we were kids, it's like you hear, we went outside and played and Mom would say,

MOM: "Come home when the street lights come on!"

REBECCA: And every neighbor around us, if we got out of line, would be right on us. And then they'd be telling Mom, and then we'd get it twice, you know? But now, it's just so different because half the time you're afraid to let your kids go out the door alone without someone with them or watchin' em. And I tell my grandkids that all the time, "Don't go anywhere alone!" You know, "Don't let anybody give you anything! You only eat what's in your lunch!" It's just, there's so much now that you have to be concerned about, with the drugs, and with the trafficking, I mean, all of it. It's just hard to feel safe anywhere but when I was growing up, I mean we could be out, we could just be safe, you know. There wasn't that fear of someone around every corner, or something lurking somewhere. It

was safer.

DIANNE:. I don't think it's less safe [now]. Criminals have definitely gotten smarter, technology has definitely allowed them to get smarter, we have had to change the way we create the safety now, I think, and not be so carefree about it. Back then we would leave our cars unlocked and parked outside, you know those little things that we took for granted. You gotta do it now. You gotta lock your car, you gotta lock all your doors in your house, you gotta lock all your doors in the school. It's a different type of safety.

JAMES: Years ago, rural life was more peaceful, but now we're getting more and more, some of the things that big cities are getting, we're just not getting as many. You're talking drugs, it's here. If anyone tells you they don't have it, that's not the case. We just indicted two here for trafficking heroin.

DROPPING LIKE FLIES

THERESA: There's a lot of drugs right now. Thats our big conversation in the community is substance abuse and a heroin epidemic really. People are dropping like flies, it was kind of a dirty little secret around town and now it's really in our face.

CAROL: The opiate problem in general, it's gotten much much worse. Like, people I went to school with are afraid to let their kids walk to school. When I was growing up they would've thought that was crazy that you couldn't let an eight year old walk to school by herself.

RICHARD: And that's just come about really big time in the last few years. Well, see when I was running these teen dances for example, that was not an issue. If it was, certainly nobody knew about it. I didn't know about drugs then, and I was working with the kids. Now there was some alcohol involved but minimal, minimal compared to what it is today. These drug activities, it's just completely out of control.

THERESA: The queer community and race are near and dear to my heart, but the biggest thing we have to work on right now is drugs. My best friend, he used to be a heroin addict, and he is literally watching his friends die. He's not around that anymore, but he's been hearing they're cutting the drugs with horse tranquilizers and things like that, so he's having a hard time because he doesn't talk to these people anymore, but somebody was clean and they take it one more time and they die. We have to deal with that body count.

RICHARD: Well, all you do is pick up the paper today in Columbus, the Columbus Dispatch, the governor finally, you know, they're after him to allocate more money to treat drug addiction. It's just, it's getting out of control. When you read the deaths as a result of drug abuse, and you pick [up] the obituaries and the first thing you do is you look at the age, and they're twenty and thirty year olds. Well, that tells you a lot right there. They don't say how they died but, oh, it's so sad. And I don't know how they're gonna control that.

NOWHERE TO GO, NOTHING TO DO

DIANNE: I work in the medical community and we're seeing how, as medical professionals, we can kind of unintentionally get someone addicted to something, [and that] can be a huge contributing factor, and also just, people who think they're down and out, maybe they've lost their job, they've been laid off, it's so easy right now, and I'm amazed at how easy it is right now, to have illicit drugs just anywhere in this community. It is shocking to me, it's pretty darn easy to get it on the streets anymore, in little old Mount Vernon, it is incredibly easy. And I think if we empower these people that might think that they're down and out, and they don't have any place to go, if we just love them and show them that we can help them kind of straighten their ways, we might be able to make some advances.

CLAIRE: Well, I have opinions about this. But I was talking to my old alcohol counselor about these people very close to me. And one of those people is off the painkillers and still drinking, and I am like, "Does that work?" And she said, "Is it working for them?" And I said, "Yeah, they seem to actually be okay drinking, but I'm scared." And she said Claire, "Alcohol is something genetic, it is something in ya. Painkillers, they are just addictive. Nobody can avoid that, nobody." And doctors are prescribing pain killers, my little cousin was prescribed to, what was it? The big one, the really strong one. I've lost it! But she was prescribed for a urinary tract infection and then became a heroin addict. My little, it's not right say this, but you know, Hilliard, Ohio, perfect kid. She has a lot of tendencies like me, that introversion, you know, but thank you doctor, because those were really expensive, but the heroin wasn't. She's doing great now. She is an inspiration. But you know, once you get on the pills it is really hard to get off. So I think there's been an over-prescribing of pain-

killers. And people are filling their highs and if you have to go to heroin, you do. Once they are in that state of mind in their addiction, you can't hate them, you just gotta help them, and hope and hope.

THERESA: How do people know where to find drugs? I'm just not a drug person. I am so naive to some of this stuff. It think it's a lot of the adults, my friend he's thirty-five, [and] my mom's graduating class in the '80s. Those people, that age range is who is really dealing with it. There's not a lot to do around here, we don't have good after school programs, we don't have a lot of good college prep or after high school stuff. So you're out of high school, what are you going to do? And class access. Because when your son is rich and gets addicted to heroin your son gets rehab. When your son is poor and gets addicted to heroin he gets jail. He doesn't get treatment. We are helping, we're taking steps, but there is a lot that needs to be done attitude wise.

CAROL: There's always the class issues that exist around here. And poorer populations tend to need something to help out with their lives, you know. It's hard. And the more expensive it is to live, the worse that's going to get around here. Well, Siemens is getting ready to close, that's not gonna be good for us. I know when Rolls Royce changed, before Siemens bought it, that was really rough.

MARGARET: The whole thing when the glass companies left.

CAROL: Yeah, when the glass companies left it was real bad.

MARGARET: And that's still echoing.

CAROL: Yeah. Lack of work. Lack of, not work, lack of

good paying jobs.

MARGARET: Nowhere to go, nothing to do. Entertainment-- I would desperately not want to be a young person in Knox County.

CAROL: Oh no, no no. (Laughter) It's boring. It's very boring.

DIANNE: So, one of my biggest things that I'm really active in, and have been for about three or four years now, is the Knox Substance Abuse Action Team. So we are a huge drug task force action team, and we are comprised of many members of the community of Knox County working on combating our issue of addiction.

RICHARD: I guess it starts with education, with the young people. Of course, parents have to be educated too, since the fact that there's a change maybe in the person's personality, or whatever it is, some clues. Cause there's a lot of, you know, a child changes when they get involved. And parents need to be aware of that. They can't put their head in the sand and think, "Oh, it's not me," or, "It's not us."

CLAIRE: I was a part of the Knox addiction conference last year and we talked about stigmas. I think of my own family, there was a stigma three years ago of like, I hate drug addicts. And that over the last three years has transferred into, How do I help? This person is not a bad drug addict, this is a person that is really addicted to drugs and nobody, nobody! wants to be addicted to drugs! It's like being in prison. You know people don't want to have to live to take a pill, people want to live their lives! People want to be good fathers, and nobody wants to be dependent. So I think I'm getting rid of that stigma of the drug addict. You know I feel bad, too, cause it's sort of in all of

us. And the way we walk down the street, you see somebody in Mount Vernon kinda tweaking out a bit and I think, "You were no different. You were no different at all." Actually that was one of the things that got me thinking about stopping drinking years ago. I was hanging out with homeless people on the street. I was always drawn to walking away from my friends and hanging out with people, and I realized, I am like one drink away from just giving up completely and, isn't that crazy, little Claire from Mount Vernon, Ohio, that's got it all together. That could be me.

DIANNE: I was just at a meeting this morning where someone referred to anyone who's struggling as a neighbor, and they are literally our neighbors. Because addiction can happen to anyone, anywhere, of any lifestyle. It is faceless, and so it's a huge undertaking and one of our biggest things that my committee's doing right now is we're creating this resource booklet, and it's gonna be about a fifty page resource booklet that will be free to anyone who needs it. Because addiction of any sort can just lead people into such depression and just feel like they have failed failed failed failed and they're done, no one cares about them, no one loves them, and we do, this community does, we just have to get people to realize what initiatives and facilities are there. You know, recovery housing is a huge, huge huge passion of mine also, and trying to get recovery housing in this area, because we can treat someone, and start healing their addiction, but we gotta phase them into how to get back into life. Recovery housing is a huge missing link in this area.

CLAIRE: Recovery housing would be a great thing, you know. I know from trying to get somebody into treatment around here. *(Scoffs)* What do you do?! What do you do if they don't have insurance? I mean you call a place,

NURSE: “Well do they have insurance?”

CLAIRE: No, so what, you’re going to get him a bed at Salvation Army? That’s the other problem. When you call places they don’t have spots. They have a spot in three weeks. And if you’re in that moment, where you are asking for help because in three weeks, I’m gone! No way! They need immediate help, there needs to be a response immediately. This is a problem it’s killing people it is destroying families. I think it’s happening to small towns everywhere. I listen to NPR and *This American Life* and it’s just taking out towns and we need to get ahead of it because in Mount Vernon, great things are happening.

DIANNE: I think I’m at that place where I can be very helpful. I am one that can’t and doesn’t want to say no to people, and I want to kind of lead and create excitement and try to draw people in to continue to make this place so cool. I mean, you look at downtown, oh my gosh, I’m so excited with what’s happening in downtown Mount Vernon. To see what it was like when I was a little girl, I would go shop in downtown Mount Vernon, that’s where I bought my clothes, that’s where we bought jewelry, and then those things faded away. And now those things are coming back and that is what’s so cool. Oh, I just love to go downtown now and get a cup of coffee, and go next door and read, and see all my friends at Paragraphs Bookstore.

ANYTHING BUT DEAD

JOHN: In my lifetime, you know, when I was a kid up until the late eighties there was still Sears and Woolworth’s

but there was a lot of empty shops. Basically you were looking at a dead downtown. People would come and rent because it was cheap but there was nothing to keep them downtown. So I watched all of that sort of slowly die and wither, and then I watched the Coshocton Avenue corridor go from being kind of sporadic to being just jam-packed, which is what it is, all the restaurants moved, all the shopping moved, you know, Big Bear moved up and built the whole big plaza where K-Mart is, that was a really big thing when it happened, and Walmart came in. And really that was all trees when I was a kid.

CLAIRE: Well when I was in, I don't know if it was middle school or high school, but Mount Vernon I believe was voted the homeliest community in Ohio, I think. The homeliest? Yeah. And then I left and from what I understand, those years I was gone, I mean every time I would talk to my parents or somebody like "Oh, Mount Vernon is going downhill, going downhill," and then Karen Wright happened. I mean, that is kinda what happened.

THERESA: I do see potential for good, it has been a lot all at once. There has been some pushback to that. I think it's great, [the Wright Center] was sitting here for a long time. Some people were very angry that Kenyon was taking it over, but it was just sitting there. I think seeing the colleges in the community more is going to help a lot, maybe that's a solution, we will see you guys and we can go into your space, and academia -- it's a class thing too, the access to education can create a bitterness and resentment. We are a factory town. I think seeing people and being able to have events that the community can go to is a big deal, and it's doing something with these really old spaces, I'm a fan of it. Seeing Farley and Moore close, the owners were mean and they follow kids around because they think

you're gonna steal something, and that's annoying, but it was a part of the community. I also watched Banana Joe's get taken down. Banana Joe's was a public eyesore and a terrible place to go, but it was there! Watching Mazza's get torn down was really hard, my family is Italian, Mazza's was our Italian restaurant. My grandfather used to work in the kitchen at Mazza's, we were very close with that family, not now but we used to be, you know? It's kind of hard to see those things go, but I see a lot of opportunity to bring new ideas into the community. Change is gonna happen, so let it happen.

RICHARD: Well, I like to think of it as a community and I feel a big part of it, you know, you belong to it. You pay your taxes here, but then we live here and we do everything we can here. We're not one to go to Columbus, for example, to do our shopping if we can do it locally. And my wife brags about getting all of our gifts for the kids when we need to, we can do that locally. She loves North Main Street, those little shops up there. They're all, you know, they're all unique shops.

BOB: I vote every day with my dollar. I may vote once every four years, which I choose to do, but that's hot-button issues. Huge issues that then are gonna die back down, and we'll never see again for another four years. So, every day, what are you going to do with your dollar? In Europe, they won't grow GMO grains because the public won't pay for it, right? So, you know, they voted with their dollar, and the people who are growing the food have made a change, because if no one's paying for what you're growing, obviously you're not gonna grow it. So we've got to be able to step in and vote with our dollar. If you knew that your dollar was going to the guy that lived twenty minutes away, and it was keeping his lights on, of course you're gonna

do that, because none of us are that disconnected from the fact that that's the way socioeconomics works, and if we were spending our money right where we're at, obviously our communities are going to be loads better because our money's not travelling outside of the state or outside of the country to pay for an inferior product with inferior nutrients, grown who knows where, using what techniques? Even if it says USDA organic, I'm not [going] to that farm in California, I don't know what techniques they're using to grow food that can fill up a Wal-Mart.

RICHARD: Well if you blink your eyes you miss something in change in this county. Just going up and down Main Street and seeing all the difference, from retail to academics on Main Street today, with Kenyon and the Naz and COTC. I mean, that's all new, the last twenty years or so probably.

JOHN: I mean, as far as a recap I guess, people have kind of gotten away from downtown America, you know, more so for the shopping centers and things like that. And then you go look at Columbus and see the sprawl, you know, as I was growing up I've seen many communities towards Columbus have been swallowed up--you know, they were their own and then they just kind of been paved over with Columbus, and eventually we'll probably be in that too, but you still see these little downtown communities despite that, like Mount Vernon, that still have a downtown eclectic kind of feel.

THEY DON'T LEAVE

DIANNE: My husband and I are always asking our children about what do they want to do, you know. Yeah, they're twelve and nine, but we kinda feel like they need to start thinking about things like that. What's important to you? Is it creating those tight-knit friendships, being able to be a contributing factor in your community, and being able to carry on what built you? I hope more people get involved in community initiatives in this community, cause it's so rewarding. Yeah it's, it's time consuming, and it's frustrating at some points, and it kinda makes you angry to see where things are going, but the end result's gonna be really really rewarding, so, hopefully you all find yourselves in a position where you get involved in volunteerism and self-rewarded.

RICHARD: Well, my job was very rewarding because, to see these people starting seven, eight, nine years old and go out into the world and become very successful, whatever their profession might be. And to see those people when they come back to Mount Vernon, or even a lot of them are still in Mount Vernon, they chose to remain here. When they see you on the street, or wherever I might be, and acknowledge that they know me having been at the Y and experiences they had at the Y, that's a great reward to me.

KATHY: We would have kids that would come back and show us their babies, it's like, it's a family. When nothing else is going right, they know we'll be here on a Friday night. I mean it's just, they don't leave. They don't leave. We did our statistics for 2015, four hundred and fifty four different kids were in The Escape Zone. We averaged seventy two a night. And we don't offer anything, there's no free food. The only thing that's free is to come and play with us. You know, it's just the space, it's just the being together. Some of these kids I've known since they were ten

and now they're seventeen. We've had kids who have been coming here for years on Friday night. I would like to find a youth pastor with the skills that we need because I think the kids need to know that there is someone here at bat for them all the time. Not just on Friday nights.

JAMES: When I retired, they gave me a little plaque and a resolution that says, "Thank goodness he's gone," and all that stuff. *(laughter)* But it said on there during the time I've been here we went from three officers to four officers, one car to three cars and all that. I looked at that, and it said I had done this stuff and I said, "No, that's not right" and they looked at me and said, "What do you mean that's not right?" And I said, "It's not I." I don't believe in I. It can't be me. Its got to be a joint effort. We all have to work together. One person can't do it.

MARGARET: I've been doing this for about five years. *(gestures to hair)* It seems like a couple years but it's way more. And it's funny that now I see more kids in here, there's a young woman down in the teen space who has beautiful green, really good. And it's funny because early in my career there was a young woman who was not allowed to go to the high school because she had cherry red hair, and she couldn't go because it would be a distraction to others. But everybody gets over it in a very short time. There's more acceptance of hair and tattoos and things, I think that's been a change over time.

THERESA: There's a lot more [queer people in Knox County] than I thought. There have been some older people that have liked the [Facebook] page, and I see them and look to see who's interacting with the page. That was kind of surprising because you kind of got to think there's these older people in the community who haven't neces-

sarily been out, or maybe they're out and have been for twenty years but they haven't had a community to go to so that's kind of sad, but it's great that there's something there [now].

RICHARD: Well, all I can say is that life is constant change. People, older people, don't like change and that's sad, because change is inevitable, and change is good if it's for betterment.

OLIVIA: I think right now like the biggest issue is just communication. Like opening up to people, learning their story, and then learning my own story and getting to know both. I think if you just learn to understand people -- especially with the election, and people were so dead set on one point of view. And they weren't putting in everyone else's perspective. So, if you've already been introduced to their perspective, and your own perspective, you learn to meet in the middle, and you learn to say okay, I think this certain way, let me understand why. Just being open to it, and just communication. And [in the case of immigrants], we're providing you guys, or society with new information, a new culture, a new perspective, and more often than not, we are not just lazing around and just doing nothing for a living, we are contributing to society in general; we work, we educate ourselves, we're just trying to make a life for ourselves, just like anyone else would.

REBECCA: I think overall, for the most part, people want to do what's right, they want cohesiveness, they want people to be able to get along, it's just finding that perfect niche where we can all say, "Okay, you're right. Okay, I'm wrong on this. Okay, let's do it your way. Sure, I'll help you do that." But we just have to get over that hump. I'm sure we can do that, I mean I know Knox County can do

it. They're a great county, and there's a lot of old roots in Knox County, all over, in all of the townships and people who have been here and have raised families for years, and that will last a long time, and they'll get back to their roots and figure it out. Might take a great shaking somewhere, you know, for people to wake up, but what happens happens, and I think it'll all be ok.

OLIVIA: I think [people coming here] would notice this is a pretty small county with not very much diversity type deal so, I think that is a big thing. But I think the biggest thing is like getting involved with the community. That's when you realize that there's something more to it than what is perceived.

CAROL: Anything that anyone says about this library, everyone who works here loves it, and it's really hard to get us to leave. I suppose, on top of everything I've said, the communities are very nice. They try to take care of their own very well. They might be rather judgemental, but I mean they do accept people.

THERESA: I like that I know my city, I know the backroads, I know where to turn. The downtown being shut down is the most ridiculous thing ever, but I know how to get around it and I know where my friends are, I just like knowing it. I could drive through town with my eyes closed. I like our community. I like that I know people, too.

PATRICIA: A final story: You know, when my husband and I, when he graduated with his master's degree we were going to get married and go to Florida, and then someone that he knew at Kenyon that had employed him as a student called and said "We have this job in the PR department that I think would work out just great for you." I mean, when I think about how that changed the trajectory of where we

were headed. I have never regretted that, I never thought "Oh, it would be so nice to be in Florida." I love this community. I really do. I love the things that I have learned living in this community. It's just been very eye opening and just the connections we've made with people here. And also the ability to kind of watch Kenyon grow from these years has just been wonderful. We go over and eat lunch or dinner at Pierce often and, you know, just sit there and sometimes we think--we were married in the Church of the Holy Spirit and our wedding reception was in Pierce--so we sometimes sit there and think, "Remember your mom and Uncle Jack dancing right over there! Remember that?" I mean things have changed. But you know I guess living with those changes it doesn't seem so, it's not so stark to me. I guess we've had the advantage of seeing it happen a little bit at a time.

CLAIRE: I will not move away. I moved away once already, I moved away once from my family for 10 years. I am at an age now I want to be near my family, and at this point I cannot move the boys away. They are rooted here. I just couldn't do it, and I don't want to. And I want to be a part of this community. I finally feel like I'm grown up. And so now I'm like okay, I have my place! And I don't know, I don't want to leave. I like being a part of this community. When I was moving back I had been in LA for a while and I had established a lot of regulars where I had worked at. The reaction to me moving back to Knox County was disgust. And I got mad. I was like "Why are they judging me!? How can you judge a community you don't even know!!" I know a lot of it is, I'm liberal, I am a democrat. And it was a lot of that, ya know, that assumption that Knox County, we did vote for Trump. But you know there was a lot of that. You can't judge a place on how it votes. You have to get into the people. It was very offensive. And

surprising! How repulsed good friends of mine were, ya know? Just the judgement, and you know, it's all around you but you can find the negative everywhere and you can find a lot of beauty in people everywhere.

JAMES: I love Fredericktown. You may hear some people, "Well I'm not gonna do this, I'm not gonna do that." Well let me tell you something, [when] something happens, they're all together. You see that bandstand over there? That bandstand was built at no charge to the town. It was donated. People donated their time, put money in for the material, to help us build that bandstand. I can say people, they work together here, they stick together. When you can get people in a small community to work together, that tells you a lot. We're hoping, we're trying to get a grant, we would like to improve main street. Put new sidewalks, I'd love to see little lights up. I'd love to see that. I don't know if I'll be able to see that or not. We would like to improve it. I lived here all this time, I have no intentions of moving. I would love to see it.

MARGARET: In thirty years, I've never met somebody who didn't have a positive response to Mount Vernon.

CLAIRE: I understand my parents now. I never thought that would happen.

THERESA: I just want him to be happy. That's all I want for my son.

JOHN: You know, the middle of Ohio is a pretty interesting place with all this stuff happening.

CAROL: The communities are very nice. They try to take care of their own.

JAMES: We all have to work together. One person can't do it.

PATRICIA: I think one of the advantages of being in a smaller community is that it's a pretty easy place to stay in touch with people.

OLIVIA: We're just trying to make a life for ourselves, just like anyone else would.

CARL: This, this is the only home I've ever known! Only home I'll ever know.

MIKE: Future of Mount Vernon, they can't keep losing industry. You lose industry, you lose people.

REBECCA: Our kids did 4H, and we worked on the farm, you know, we went to church.

DIANNE: I hope more people get involved in community initiatives, because it's so rewarding.

BOB: What we've done is just the tip of the iceberg.

KATHY: That's how God took care of us.

RICHARD: All I can say is that life is constant change.

MARGARET: Uniformly positive, but so fleeting -

CLAIRE: Just let go and let God -

THERESA: My childhood was traditional -

JOHN: Time to fish or cut bait -

CAROL: We worry that the world has changed -

JAMES: I like my small town life -

PATRICIA: Kenyon was just a revelation -

OLIVIA: It's fun to share your viewpoint -

CARL: If you believe it, it works -

MIKE: What happened to my choice -

REBECCA: It's a different type of safety -

DIANNE: With nowhere to go, nothing to do -

BOB: Mount Vernon is anything but dead -

KATHY: They don't leave -

RICHARD: It's a great reward to me. It's our Knox County.